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Culture of peace

Identical letters dated 28 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to the First Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace, held on 21 September 2006 at United Nations Headquarters. The Meeting adopted the attached ministerial statement, which spells out the plan of work that the 15 like-minded countries will pursue (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44.

(*Signed*) Lauro L. **Baja**, Jr.
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 28 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

1. The Ministers of like-minded States* met on 21 September 2006 in New York, pursuant to the mandate contained in the *Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace*, adopted by their leaders on 13 September 2005 in New York.

2. The Ministers underlined the commitment of Member States to promote a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels, as embodied in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which considers, inter alia, that tolerance is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century, with human beings respecting one another in all their diversity of belief, culture and language, neither fearing nor repressing differences within and between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity.

3. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the 2005 World Summit Outcome reaffirms, inter alia, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action and the value of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

4. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction that since the adoption of the *Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace*, several reinforcing and positive developments and initiatives have taken place at the national, regional and international levels, notably the relevant resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 60th session, the launching of the Alliance of Civilization, the establishment of the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, UNESCO's flagship project on interfaith dialogue, the creation of the Human Rights Council, the Larnaca Action Plan on Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation for a Peaceful World, and the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which, inter alia, affirm the need for all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions.

5. The Ministers stressed the importance of concrete and sustained activities implemented in all regions by the widest possible range of partners and stakeholders to promote a culture of peace, and in this regard, invited States, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to develop practical and action-oriented steps at

the local, national, regional and international levels to further promote dialogue and mutual understanding among religions, cultures and civilizations.

6. The Ministers called for a strong and uniting message about the need for dialogue and understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions that should be a clear signal to commit to work together to evolve better ways of promoting tolerance and respect for diversity and respect for freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. The relevant UN organs, including the General Assembly, and the work of the CHR Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief should make positive contributions in that respect and promote much needed dialogue on those important and sensitive issues including by better implementation of all relevant provisions in the existing international instruments as well as exploring the possibility of further measures at the international, regional and national levels to enhance the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance.

7. The Ministers agreed to initiate discussions in the United Nations on the positive role that public information dissemination can play in promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief.

8. The Ministers underscored the need for harmonized and coordinated actions through, inter alia, legislative measures at national, regional and international levels, prohibiting the dissemination of xenophobic and racist materials targeting any religious or ethnic communities, which fortifies intolerance and constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility and hatred.

9. The Ministers, taking intc account the forthcoming report of the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations, agreed to consider on the need for the future designation of a UN official as focal person in the UN Secretariat to advise the Secretary-General on the growing international and regional activities on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace and other related programs and initiatives at the national, regional and international levels.

10. The Ministers agreed to exchange views, at their next meeting, on their respective national experiences in pursuance of the *Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace* and invited other governments to contribute to this effort, for the information and guidance of other UN Member States with a view to drawing their support and cooperation.

11. The Ministers decided to meet at the margins of the general debate of the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly and invited other governments to adhere to the *Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace*.

* *People's Republic of Bangladesh, Arab Republic of Egypt, The Gambia, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Slovenia, Republic of Tajikistan, Kingdom of Thailand and Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.*